



# **Analysis of Intimate Partner Homicides in Massachusetts**

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An Overview of Supplementary Homicide Report Cases between  
1986 and 2007

**Deval L. Patrick, Governor**  
**Timothy P. Murray, Lieutenant Governor**  
**Kevin M. Burke, Secretary of Public Safety and Security**

**Report prepared by:**  
**Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security**  
**Research and Policy Analysis Division**

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This document was prepared by the Research and Policy Analysis Division in the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security.

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Points of view in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security.

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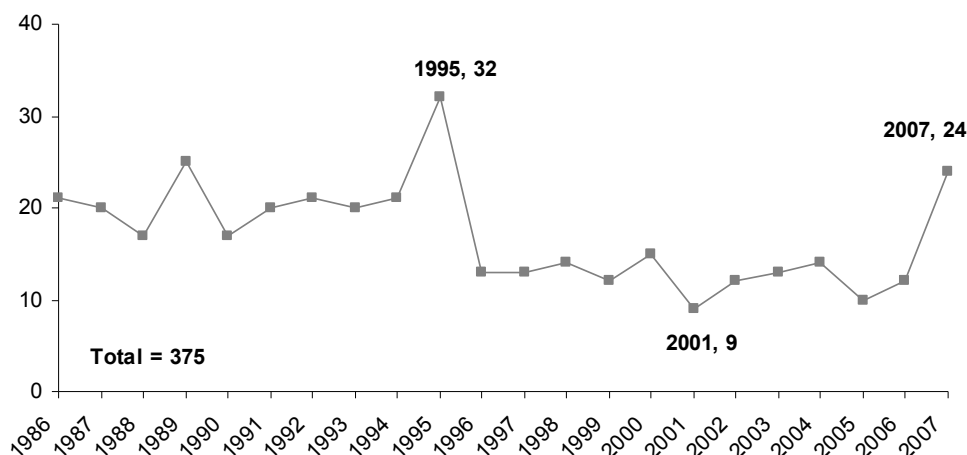
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## Data Overview

Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data was analyzed in order to gain a better understanding of the prevalence and characteristics of domestic intimate partner related homicides in Massachusetts. The analysis was conducted using SHR data collected through the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. The SHR program collects detailed data regarding the age, sex, and race of both the homicide victim and the offender; the relationship of the victim to the offender; the type of weapon used in the offense; and the circumstance and location of the incident. This report includes data voluntarily submitted to the Massachusetts State Police, Crime Reporting Unit by local police agencies as of August 2008.

For the purposes of this report, cases were categorized as "intimate partner homicides" if the victim/offender relationship was coded as: husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend, ex-husband/ex-wife, common-law husband/wife, or homosexual relationship<sup>1</sup>. According to SHR statistics, there were 375 intimate partner homicides in Massachusetts between 1986 and 2007 (see Figure 1)<sup>2</sup>. The number of intimate partner homicides fluctuated considerably over the years reaching a high in 1995 (32) and a low in 2001 (9). There were 24 intimate partner homicides in 2007, a 100% increase from the previous year. The average number of intimate partner homicides per year was 17.

**Figure 1.**  
**Homicides by Year, 1986 to 2007**



An additional analysis was conducted on intimate partner homicides occurring between 2005 and 2007 in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts based on a data collection tool (survey) designed by EOPSS for use by the 11 District Attorney's offices in the state. This report presents detailed findings on the 47 intimate partner (IP) homicide surveys returned to EOPSS by the District Attorneys. The report is titled "Massachusetts Intimate Partner Homicide Review: An Overview of District Attorney Cases between 2005 and 2007" and is available on the EOPSS website ([www.mass.gov/eopss](http://www.mass.gov/eopss)).

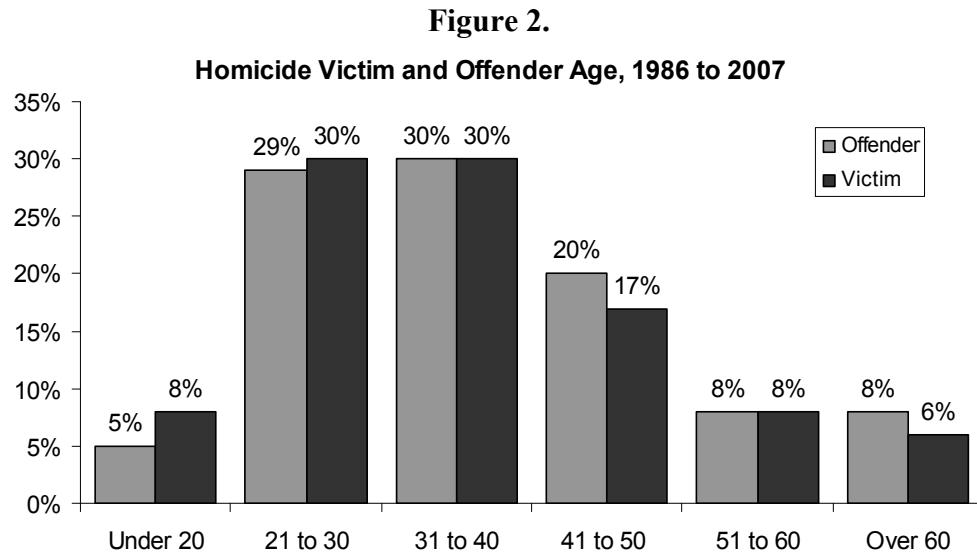
<sup>1</sup> Ex-girlfriends/boyfriends cannot be included in this analysis because there is not a separate designation for ex-boyfriends or ex-girlfriends in the FBI Supplementary Homicide Report relationship categories.

<sup>2</sup> Although there were 375 domestic violence homicides there were 377 homicide offenders. Two homicides involved 2 offenders.

## Characteristics of Homicide Victims and Offenders

### Age

Figure 2 compares the age of intimate partner homicide victims to offenders. Both intimate partner victims and offenders were most commonly between the ages of 21 and 40 (nearly 60% of both victims and offenders) at the time of the homicide. The most common age (modal age) was 25 years old for victims and 24 years old for offenders<sup>3</sup>.



### Gender

Intimate partner homicide victims were predominately female (82%) while offenders were predominately male (84%)<sup>4</sup>.

**Table 1.**

Gender of Victims and Offenders, 1986 to 2007		
	Victims	Offenders
Female	82%	16%
Male	18%	84%

<sup>3</sup> Age information was missing for 2 offenders and 3 victims.

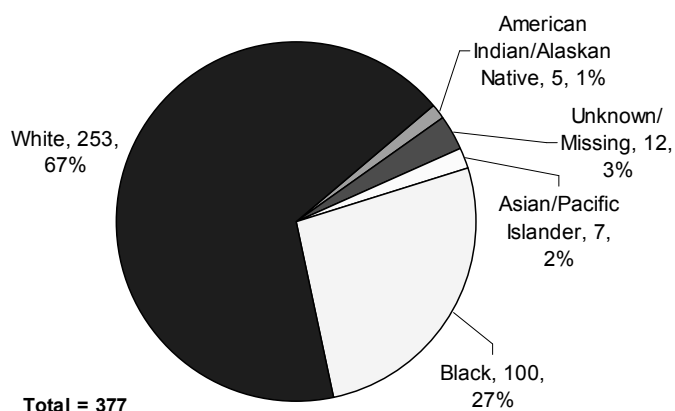
<sup>4</sup> Gender information was missing for 5 offenders.

## Race

The racial background of intimate partner homicide victims and offenders was very similar. Although White was the most common racial category for both victims and offenders, victims were slightly more likely to be White (72% compared to 67% for offenders) (see Figures 3 and 4).

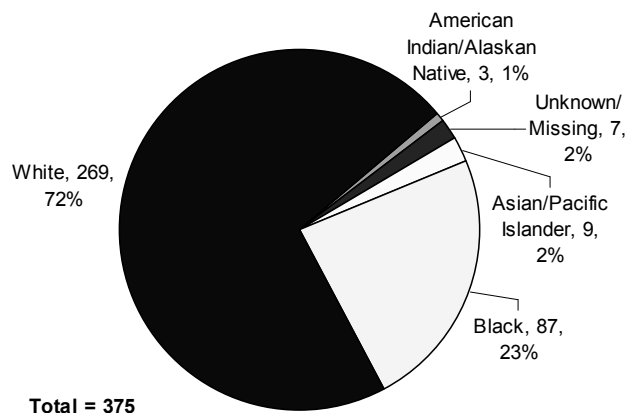
**Figure 3.**

**Homicide Offender Race, 1986 to 2007**



**Figure 4.**

**Homicide Victim Race, 1986 to 2007**

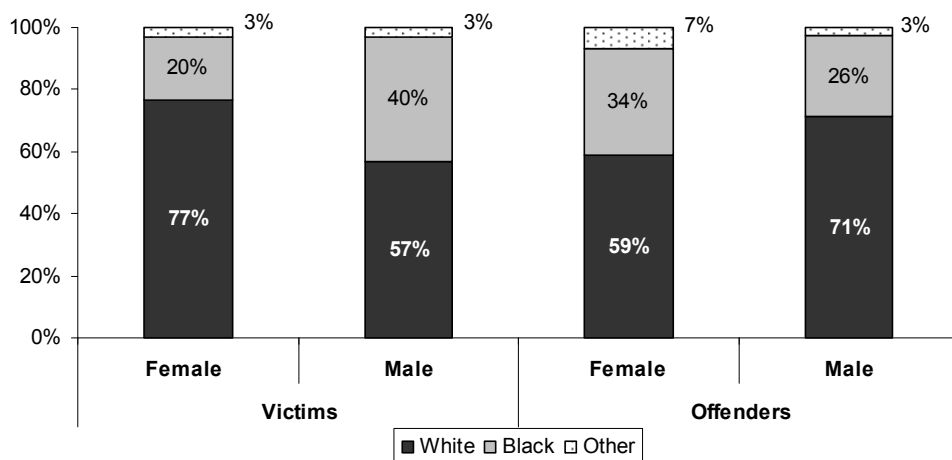


## Race and Gender

Figure 5 shows the distribution of homicide victims and offenders by gender and race<sup>5</sup>. When comparing male and female homicide victims, male victims were more racially diverse (57% White, 40% Black, and 3% other) than female homicide victims (77% White, 20% Black, and 3% other). The opposite is true for male and female offenders. Female offenders were more racially diverse than male offenders (59% White, 34% Black, and 7% other compared to 71% White, 26% Black, and 3% other).

**Figure 5.**

**Homicide Victims and Offenders by Race and Gender, 1986 to 2007**



<sup>5</sup> Racial information was missing for 7 victims.

### **Ethnicity**

Both homicide victims and offenders were most commonly Non-Hispanic (70% of victims and 56% of offenders). Offenders had a larger category of unknown ethnicity (21% compared to 11% for victims).

**Table 2.**

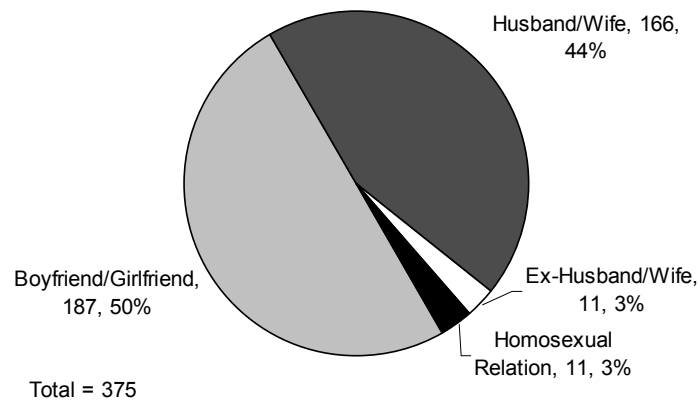
<b>Ethnicity of Victims and Offenders, 1986 to 2007</b>		
	<b>Victims</b>	<b>Offenders</b>
Non-Hispanic	70%	56%
Unknown	11%	21%
Hispanic	11%	11%
Missing	8%	12%

### **Victim-Offender Relationship**

Approximately half of all intimate partner homicides were committed by boyfriends/girlfriends (50%) followed closely by husband/wives (44%).

**Figure 6.**

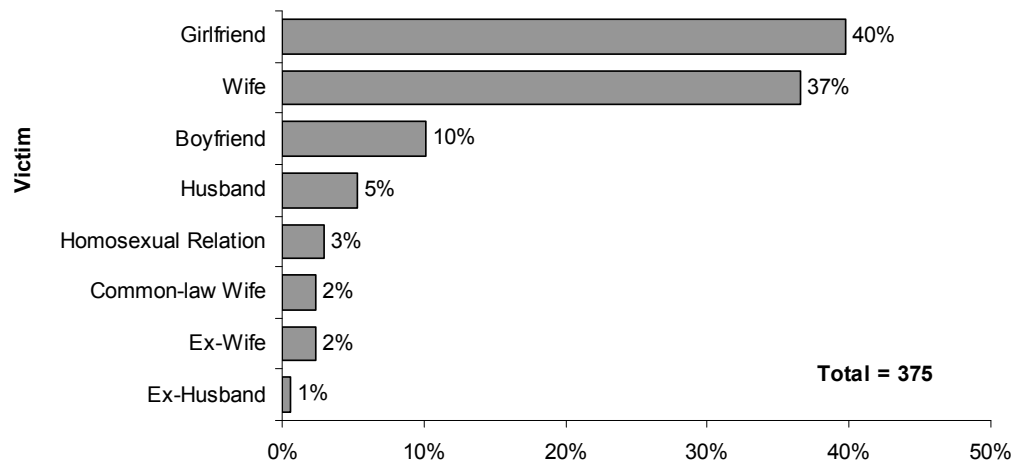
**Victim/Offender Relationship by Category, 1986 to 2007**



Intimate partner homicide victims were most commonly girlfriends of the offender (40%) or wives (37%). It is not surprising that female relationships were the most common categories given that females are much more often victims of intimate partner violence than males (82% compared to 18%, see Table 1).

**Figure 7.**

**Relationship of Victim to Offender, 1986 to 2007**



## Homicide Circumstances

### City/Town

Map 1 shows the distribution of intimate partner homicides around the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Intimate partner homicides are widely dispersed, 31% of Massachusetts cities/towns experienced one or more homicide between 1986 and 2007 (109 of 351 cities/towns).

**Map 1.**  
**Count of Intimate Partner Homicides, 1986 to 2007**

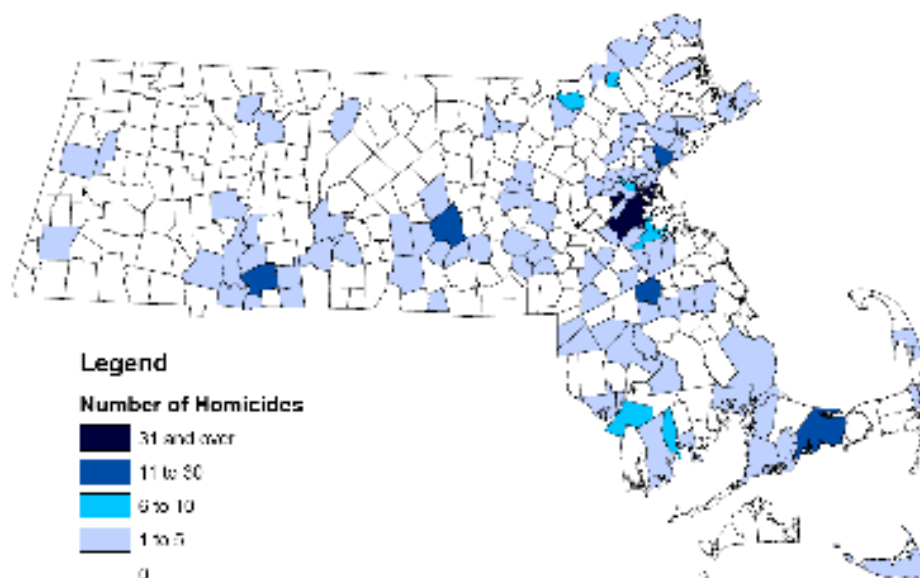
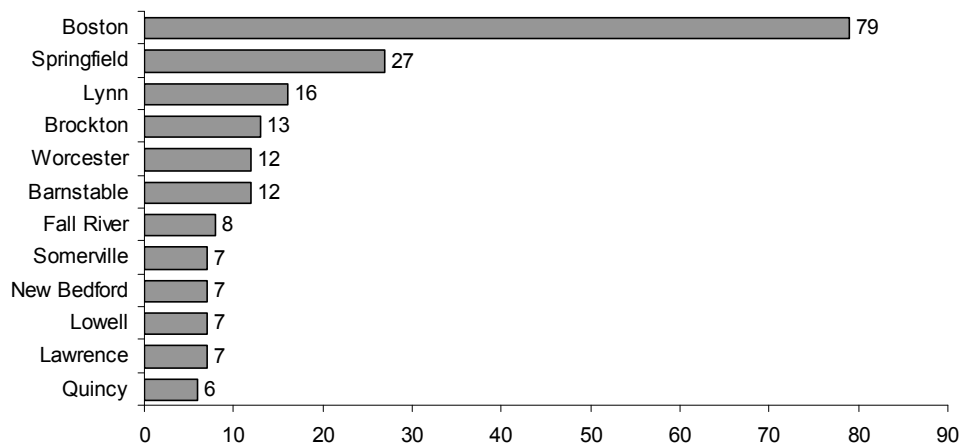


Figure 8 shows the most common city/town where intimate partner homicides occurred. Cities/towns not shown had 5 or fewer homicides between 1986 and 2007. Boston had the largest number of intimate partner homicides during this time period (79), followed by Springfield (27) and Lynn (16).

**Figure 8.**  
**City/Town of Homicide, 1986 to 2007**



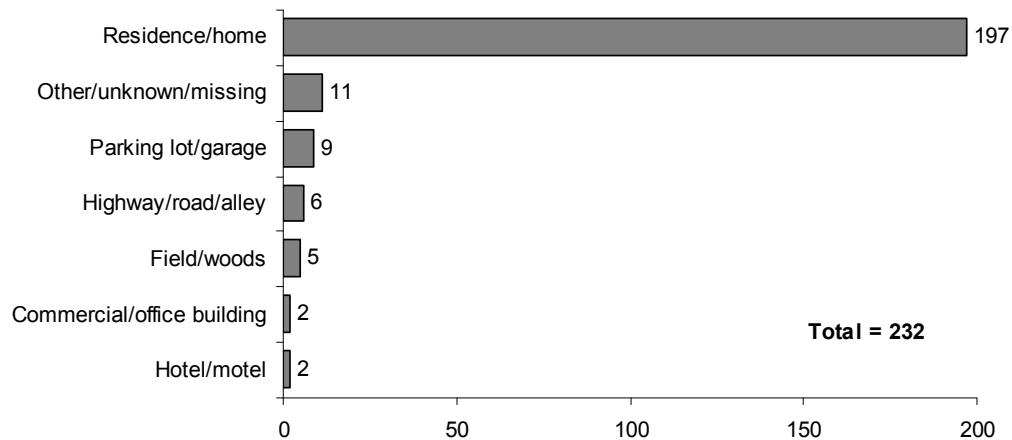


## Location

Intimate partner homicides most often occurred in a residence/home (197 or 85%). Location could only be analyzed for cases that occurred between 1993 and 2007 due to a large number of missing data prior to 1993.

**Figure 9.**

**Location of Homicide, 1993 to 2007**

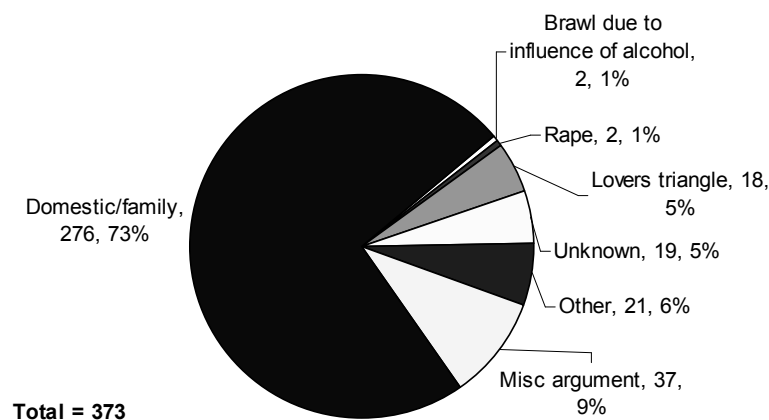


## Circumstance

SHR data also includes a variable regarding the circumstance of the homicide. Of the intimate partner homicides analyzed<sup>6</sup>, almost three quarters were considered domestic/family (73%) followed by miscellaneous argument (9%)<sup>7</sup>.

**Figure 10.**

**Circumstance of Homicide, 1986 to 2007**



<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this report, homicides were categorized as intimate partner homicides based on the relationship of the victim and offender (see Data Overview for more information).

<sup>7</sup> Circumstance information was missing for 2 victims.

## Weapon

The most common weapon used in intimate partner homicides was a knife (39%) followed by a firearm (28%).

**Figure 11.**

### **Weapon Used in Homicide, 1986 to 2007**

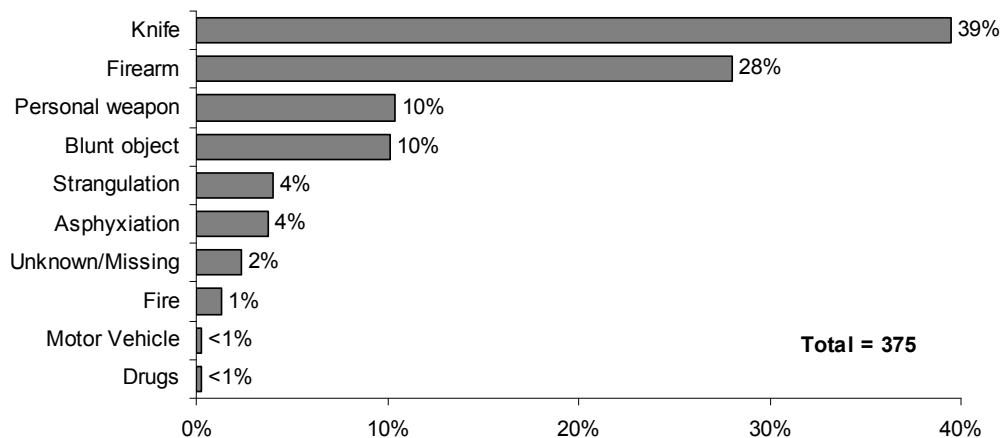


Figure 12 shows the differences in weapons used on female and male homicide victims. In 70% of homicides involving male victims a knife was used, compared to only 34% involving female victims. In other words, males were more commonly killed with a knife than females. Firearms were used more often on females victims (30%) compared to male victims (18%).

**Figure 12.**

### **Weapon by Victim Gender, 1986 to 2007**

